



RATED PG: parental guidance

SUGGESTED

A Parent's Guide for Student Academic Achievement and Financial Assistance

Volume 6 • Issue 1

Published by MOSTARS
3515 Amazonas Drive, Jefferson City, MO 65109

April 1999

Taking Standardized Tests...

preparing to make
the grade

In this issue . . .

We hope you're finding RATED PG a useful resource. We wish to thank the high school guidance counselors who, in some cases, have a formidable task in distributing our publication to the parents of all their ninth- and tenth-grade students.

In this issue, you will learn about taking standardized tests (when to take them and which ones your student should take) and how to offset the costs for Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exam fees.

In addition, we have included information about the Missouri Fine Arts Academy and the Missouri Scholars Academy (three-week residential summer programs for exceptional Missouri high school students).

We hope you find at least one topic in this issue of RATED PG that you can use to your advantage.

Enjoy!

PLAN • ACT • PSAT • SAT

When colleges and high school counselors mention these terms, what do they mean? Should you and your student worry about these tests, or are they just so many letters? RATED PG is here to help you understand these and other test words.

It is important that students achieve good scores on the ACT or the SAT because they are both used as qualifiers for college admission and for many competitive scholarships. Although these scores are typically only a part of the admissions process for most colleges and universities, they are also a basis for awarding scholarships, which makes test preparation very important.

Can your student "study" for standardized tests? His or her best "studying" is taking a challenging high school curriculum that covers all of the core courses (English, science, mathematics, social science/history). Your student, however, can also "study" for standardized tests by taking practice tests to make sure he or she becomes familiar with the testing formats. The ACT and SAT both offer free test-taking guides that provide sample tests, test-taking tips, and other general information that may help your student perform better on the actual test. You can find these in your high school counselor's office.

In addition, you can encourage your

student to take the ACT and/or SAT more than once to improve his or her score. Make sure your student begins taking the test early so that a second test can be taken, if necessary, before admissions and scholarship deadlines at the colleges he or she is considering. With continued practice, students can lessen the anxiety that goes along with taking these tests, which may help improve their scores.

Your high school counselor's or principal's office is the best place to start gathering information on standardized tests.

If you have questions regarding the PLAN or ACT, contact the ACT, Inc. Midwest Regional Office at 300 Knightsbridge Parkway, Suite 300, Lincolnshire, IL 60069-9498, (847) 634-2560.

Questions regarding the PSAT or SAT should be directed to The College Board Midwest Office, 1800 Sherman Ave., Suite 401, Evanston, IL 60201, (847) 866-1708.

ACT: It's the standardized college

THE TESTS

entrance exam administered by ACT, Inc. — the one required by most Missouri and Midwestern colleges. It's recommended that high school students take the ACT on the April or June national test dates during their junior year. Students may want to retake the ACT (typically to improve their scores) on another national test date during their senior year. Results from those tests, however, may arrive too late to meet admissions deadlines at some colleges. Contact the individual admissions offices at the colleges regarding test score deadlines. The ACT is administered at approved sites nationwide in October, December, February, April, and June. Your high school counselor will have test dates, locations, and registration information.

PLAN: The PLAN is a test administered during the student's sophomore (tenth grade) year. This test is ideal for all students to take, regardless of their plans after high school. In addition to measuring academic ability, PLAN also includes an interest

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inventory and academic course-work plan. The interest inventory gathers information about a student's talents and interests, which, when used with the test results, are translated into possible career directions and goals. The academic course-work portion of the test determines whether or not a student is getting adequate preparation to pursue his or her career goals and can help in planning the last two years of high school course-work. PLAN also helps students prepare for taking the ACT. PLAN is administered by individual high schools, but not all high schools offer the test. If your school is not offering PLAN, talk to the principal or counselor.

PSAT: The PSAT is a pretest for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) college entrance exam, which is administered by the high school. The PSAT is taken during a student's junior year of high school. Besides being a "test run" for taking the SAT, the PSAT is a prequalifier for the National Merit Scholarship Program. The PSAT is typically available for all 11th graders at the high schools that administer it; however, it is most valuable to those students who have the potential to earn a National Merit Scholarship and/or plan to take the SAT.

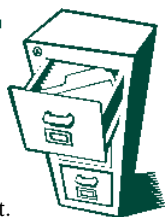
SAT: This standardized college entrance exam, administered by The College Board, is the required test for some colleges – typically those located in the eastern or western regions of the country. To find out which exam (ACT or SAT) is preferred by a particular college, call the admissions office. The College Board recommends that students take the SAT during the spring of their junior year, leaving time to retake the test, if desired, during the fall of their senior year. National test dates are in October, November, December, January, March, May, and June. The SAT is administered nationwide at designated sites. You can obtain information on test dates, sites, and registration from your high school counselor. Again, verify test score deadlines with college admissions offices when scheduling test dates. ♦

ACT, Inc. and the College Board provide free test preparation materials.

You can find out about these by contacting the organizations using the information on the front page of this issue of *RATED PG*. You should also be able to find numerous books and other publications regarding test preparation in your local or high school library.

In addition, there are several publications on the subject which you can buy at local book stores. In any case, we recommend that you begin by checking with your student's high school counselor regarding the best materials available.

Resource Center



Test-taking Tips

1. Get plenty of sleep the night before the test.
2. If you feel nervous, try to relax by taking a few deep breaths.
3. Keep confident in your abilities and plan to do your best.
4. Listen carefully to instructions, and ask questions if you do not understand something.
5. Focus your attention entirely on your work.
6. Position your answer sheet next to your test booklet to mark answers quickly and accurately.
7. Before answering each question, read it, and all possible responses, completely.
8. If you're unsure of an answer, choose one you think is best and go on.
9. Pace yourself by occasionally checking the time.
10. If you finish before time is up, go back and recheck your answers.

From 'GET SET for College: A College Planning Guide for Missouri Students and Parents,' published by ACT, Inc. and distributed to high school counselors



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RATED PG: parental guidance suggested is published three times each year by MOSTARS (Missouri Student Assistance Resource Services) and the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority (MOHELA) for parents of Missouri high school freshmen and sophomores. Editorial content for this publication is shared by the commissioner for higher education and MOHELA.

High school counselors may photocopy issues of **RATED PG** after placing the following information on an original copy:

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For more information about this publication and about items and articles printed in this newsletter, please write or call:

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(800) 473-6757 or (573) 751-3940

OR

Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority
Corporate Plaza
14528 South Outer Forty Drive
Chesterfield, MO 63017
(314) 469-0600



MFPP offsets exam costs

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is pleased to announce the availability of funding to offset the costs for Advanced Placement (AP) exam fees, International Baccalaureate (IB) exam fees, and dual credit course fees for eligible students. This opportunity is funded through the Missouri Fee Payment Program (MFPP), appropriated by the General Assembly.

Students attending Missouri public and private schools are eligible for fee/course payment through the Missouri Fee Payment Program if they meet the following criteria:

1. The student must have taken a high school Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) assessment in the previous spring and scored Proficient or Advanced prior to payment request.
2. The student plans to take an Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exam or is enrolled in a dual credit course in a content area related to that in which they scored Proficient or Advanced.

DESE will pay up to the full cost of an Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exam and/or up to \$40 per credit hour for each eligible student, providing sufficient funds are available. Eligible students may request payment for dual credit course

fees and AP or IB exam fees within the same school year and in more than one content area, based on their MAP assessment scores. As other MAP assessments are required, funding may be available for courses related to those disciplines.

For AP and IB exam fees, payment will be made directly to either the College Board or to International Baccalaureate prior to the exam date and the district will be notified of the fee amount paid for each student. Students and/or school districts will be responsible for paying any additional costs not covered by these funds, according to the published policies of the College Board, International Baccalaureate, or local school district.

For dual credit course fee payment, the district will be notified of the fee amount paid for each student and payment will be made directly to the school district for disbursement to the student, college, or university. Only Missouri institutions are eligible for payment of course fees. Students and/or school districts will be responsible for paying any additional costs not covered by these funds, according to the published requirements of the college or university.

If you have any questions regarding the policies or procedures for the MFPP program, please contact DESE's Gifted Education Programs Section at (573)751-2453. ♦

DESE sponsors summer programs

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is sponsoring the following three-week residential summer programs from June 13 – July 3, 1999.

Students must be residents of Missouri and be nominated by the public or private Missouri high schools they attend in order to be considered for admission.

There is no cost to the students, who need only supply their own transportation to and from the academy and "pocket money" for personal and incidental expenses.

Participants are drawn from across Missouri and represent the diversity of the state. No grades or credits are awarded. The programs are singularly free from competition, creating an environment that is conducive to building a community of friends and colleagues.

Students live in a college dormitory with separate quarters for men and women. They learn a great deal about themselves and others as they live together in a community and develop long-lasting friendships. A select group of teachers and mentors, chosen from across the state, works closely with the students in classes, seminars, and co-curricular activities. Well-known speakers and performers, as well as field trips, special events, and a wide range of recreational opportunities provide an array of stimulating activities that offer fun and enjoyment, along with

learning. Student-initiated events are encouraged.

MISSOURI FINE ARTS ACADEMY (MFAA)

Initiated in 1996, the Missouri Fine Arts Academy is for artists who have completed their sophomore or junior year of high school. This program offers students the opportunity to enhance their skills in such fields as dance, visual arts, theater, and music, and to participate in a stimulating series of interdisciplinary and co-curricular activities.

The 1999 Fine Arts Academy will be held from June 13 – July 3 on the Southwest Missouri State University campus in Springfield. Participants have the chance to know and make friends with other talented, enthusiastic artists who have demonstrated commitment to their art. The give-and-take among students from different backgrounds is one of the most treasured aspects of the program.

Students who are accepted must be prepared to get involved and to become a participating, contributing member of the MFAA community, artistically and socially. Because there is such a variety of opportunities for personal, educational, and cultural growth in this program, students have to make choices at times in order to fully

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MOSTARS sponsors Mapping-Your-Future

MOSTARS is committed to providing students and families with information about college, career, and financial assistance choices. To assist in accomplishing this mission, we participate as a sponsor in Mapping-Your-Future – a website that provides up-to-date information about student assistance and innovative student aid services. The sponsorship and goal of this website is to provide information about higher education and career opportunities.

You can locate Mapping-Your-Future at www.mapping-your-future.org/ or by utilizing the link to Mapping-Your-Future when you visit the MOSTARS website at www.mocbhe.gov/mostars/fimenu.htm. ♦

The Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority

The Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority (MOHELA) is a not-for-profit financial entity. Each year, MOHELA assists in the origination of loans with client lending institutions. MOHELA also purchases loans from lending institutions and then services the loan(s) of those borrowers during the repayment period. MOHELA serves as the origination and servicing agent for most private lenders in Missouri, and is the only Missouri-based secondary market.

MOHELA maintains a partnership role with private lenders in developing programs that make loan funds available to Missourians for postsecondary education. The cost of college makes federal loan programs an important supplement to educational finance. By going to the bond markets, MOHELA raises the money that will, in turn, assist students and parents.

If you are a parent with a student who has already enrolled in or completed college, or if you have outstanding education loans, contact MOHELA about loan consolidation by calling its loan consolidation hotline at (800) 666-4352, ext. 3444, today. ♦

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participate. The program offers the chance to be responsible for individual learning.

The MFAA seeks to help outstanding high school students achieve their artistic and personal potential, cultivate their leadership capabilities, and develop their flexibility and creativity, while increasing their awareness of future possibilities for themselves, Missouri, and society.

The program moves at a swift pace and advanced level as students explore concepts, theory, and a cross section of the arts. Each student has a major field of study, as well as an interdisciplinary artistic class. Students are expected to attend daily classes for the entire three-week academy and to participate fully in the instructional and social life of the community. Nominees should be excellent representatives of their discipline, functioning well in the school and community setting, and mature enough to live away from home successfully. For more information about the Missouri Fine Arts Academy, contact the State Programs Section, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, at (573) 751-3175.

MISSOURI SCHOLARS ACADEMY (MSA)

Established in 1985, the Missouri Scholars Academy (MSA) is for outstanding Missouri students who have completed their sophomore year of high school. MSA provides academic and personal growth in a challenging, non-traditional experience that balances a strong liberal arts program with a full co-curricular and residential life experience.

The 1999 Scholars Academy will be held from June 13 – July 3 on the University of

Missouri – Columbia campus.

If accepted, scholars must be prepared to get involved and to become a participating, contributing member of the MSA community, academically and socially. Because there is such a variety of opportunities for personal, educational, and cultural growth in this program, students will have to make choices at times. The program offers an opportunity to be responsible for individual learning.

The Missouri Scholars Academy seeks to help exceptional high school students achieve their academic and personal potential, cultivate their leadership capabilities, and develop their flexibility, creativity, and critical thinking, while heightening their sensitivity to future possibilities for themselves, Missouri, and society.

The program moves at a swift pace and advanced level as the scholars concentrate on concepts, theory, and discovery. The academic program is designed for enrichment, not practice or advancement in special subjects. Each student selects both a major and a minor area of study and participates in a personal and social dynamics class. Students are expected to attend daily classes for the entire three-week academy and to participate fully in the academic and intellectual life of the community. Nominees should be outstanding representatives of their school, functioning well in the school and community setting, and mature enough to live away from home successfully.

For more information about the Missouri Scholars Academy, contact the Gifted Education Programs Section, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, at (573) 751-2453. ♦